

2012

TEXAS TEACHING COMMISSION

Recommendations for the
Next Generation of Teaching Policy in Texas



EDUCATE TEXAS

a public-private initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas





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LETTER FROM CHAIRMAN MOSES AND VICE-CHAIRMAN NELSON

As former Commissioners of Education, we have seen firsthand the power of great teaching and its impact on a child's life. We are fortunate in Texas to have a dedicated group of over 300,000 individuals who have answered the call to become teachers. Our goal with this report is to help honor those individuals and provide recommendations for strengthening and supporting their profession. Texas faces significant challenges in the coming years and we need to rethink how we train and support teachers to better meet the needs of the next generation of students.

The Texas Teaching Commission came together in December 2011 to begin the discussion about how to improve the training and supports for teachers in Texas. Over the course of the year we set an ambitious path to look at all facets of the teaching profession including: preparation, recruitment, hiring, induction, evaluation, development, compensation, and retention, looking for areas to improve the policy supports that are provided at the state and district levels.

This report is intended to provide a roadmap for the state and districts as they think about how to address the important need to continue developing and supporting the individuals who choose to become teachers.

We owe a great amount of gratitude to the dedicated team who helped develop this report, all of whom put their heart and soul into the process. The individuals and groups involved in this process are some of the most influential and successful education advocates in the state, and we are incredibly proud to have had the opportunity to convene such a robust and dynamic body.

We'd like to recognize and give thanks to the numerous guest experts that joined us throughout the year including Learning Forward, The New Teacher Center, the New Schools Venture Fund, the Boston Teacher Residency, Hillsborough County Public Schools, the National Math and Science Initiative, the Colorado Education Association, Austin Independent School District, Dallas Independent School District, and Houston Independent School District. We'd also like to thank the staff at Educate Texas and Education First for their tireless work throughout this process.

Finally, none of this work would have been possible without the generous support of our foundation partners. We are greatly indebted to Communities Foundation of Texas, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The Meadows Foundation, and the Sid W. Richardson Foundation.

We believe the recommendations presented in this report are an important stepping stone in enhancing the teaching profession and the quality of education in Texas. Our teachers and students deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,



Mike Moses, Chair
former Commissioner of Education



Jim Nelson, Vice-Chair
former Commissioner of Education

TEXAS TEACHING COMMISSION MEMBERS

Mike Moses (chair)
former Commissioner of Education

Jim Nelson (vice-chair)
AVID Center/former Commissioner of Education

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Human Resources Director

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Jeanne Gerlach, *University of Texas-Arlington*

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Julian Trevino, *former San Antonio Independent School District Board President*

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Priscilla Aquino-Garza, *Stand for Children-Texas*

Rod Paige, *former Secretary of Education*

Elisa Villanueva Beard, *Teach for America*

Jerel Booker, *formerly of Stand for Children-Texas**

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Representative Rob Eissler, *Chair of the Texas House Public Education Committee*

John Fitzpatrick, *Educate Texas*

Commissioner Raymund Paredes, *Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board*

Former Commissioner Robert Scott,
Texas Education Agency

Senator Florence Shapiro, *former chair of the Texas Senate Education Committee*

Commission Staff

Mark Baxter, *Educate Texas*

Kelty Garbee, *Educate Texas*

Julie Harris-Lawrence, *Educate Texas*

We would also like to recognize the teacher associations including the Texas Classroom Teachers Association (Holly Eaton), Association of Texas Professional Educators (Ginger Franks), Texas State Teachers Association (James Harris), and Texas American Federation of Teachers (Louis Malfaro), who played a significant role in the development of this report. Fundamental differences voiced during the Commission meetings related to the recommendations about evaluation and compensation caused the associations to decide against endorsing the final report. We regret this decision considering that their insight and perspective helped to inform much of the discussion throughout the process.

*Jerel Booker served on the Commission for six months before taking a position with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

INTRODUCTION

Addressing Our Future and the Changing Nature of Teaching in Texas

National and state research confirms what we know intuitively — the single most important variable in student achievement is the quality of the individual teacher in the classroom. Fortunately, Texas already is focusing on teacher recruitment, training, development and retention through a range of district and state initiatives, legislative and administrative policies, grant programs, and local traditional and non-traditional K-12 and higher education efforts. However, there is room to improve. Many existing programs, policies, and initiatives operate in isolation with little alignment or cohesion between state policies and investments and local district implementation, investments, and quality control. Looking ahead, the challenge of ensuring quality teaching is magnified by the pending retirement of a generation of baby-boomer teachers in the next decade, as well as a shortage of teachers in high-need areas such as math, science, and bilingual education.

With this in mind, Educate Texas, a public-private initiative of the Communities Foundation of Texas, endeavors to advance new information, strategies, and ideas on how the Lone Star State can better align various state policies and local programs with the comprehensive goal of better training, supporting, evaluating, and compensating our state's teachers. Beginning in 2011, Educate Texas convened stakeholders from across the public and private sectors — including leaders in K-12 and higher education, business, and philanthropy — to launch the Texas Teaching Commission. The Commission's singular charge: Take a holistic look at the teaching continuum in Texas, and recommend strategies for improvement. What emerged was a thoughtful, generative dialogue on how to improve and align various programs and practices already in place, and proffer next-generation policy recommendations that can promote dramatic improvements in teaching and learning.



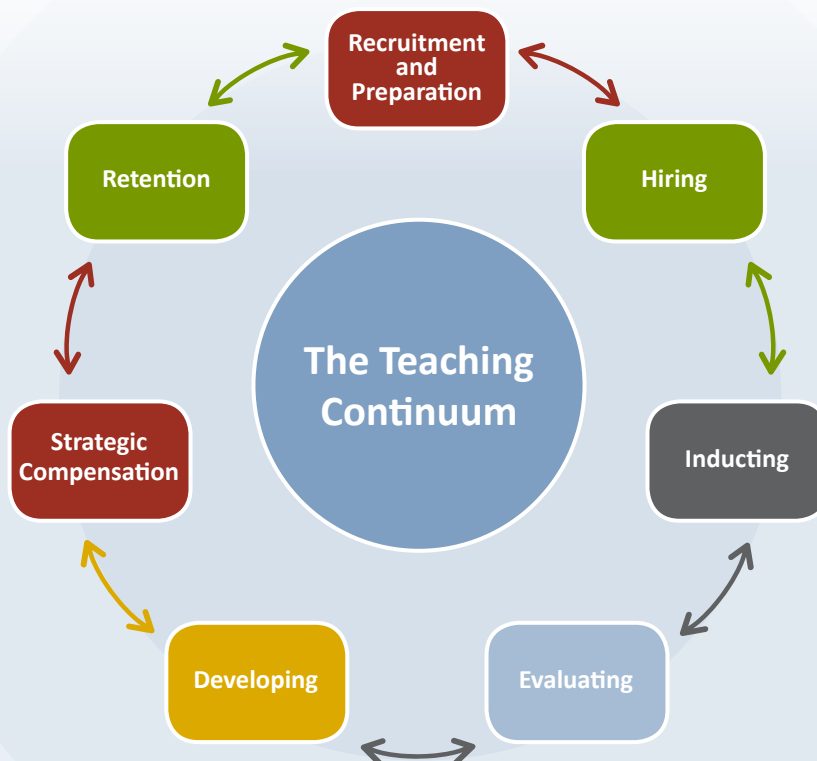
Through dialogue with experts and the support of current research — and an examination of national, state and local trends within the Texas context — the Commission looked at key policy gaps within specific segments of the teaching continuum and developed a coherent, aligned set of recommendations for improvement in seven areas as shown in Figure A.

The Commission met monthly throughout 2012 to examine elements of the continuum and has accomplished the following activities:

- Reviewed existing Texas policies and national examples to identify key areas for reform;
- Reviewed current research and heard from national experts regarding each phase of the continuum;
- Provided guidance to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) on the redesign of the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS);
- Developed specific recommendations for policy reform in all areas of the teaching continuum; and
- Produced this final report for policymakers, the TEA, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and school districts.

Because of the primary role teaching plays in supporting student learning, Texans have been appropriately concerned with establishing the right policies to support teaching and learning. The 82nd legislative session (2011) introduced several bills related to teacher preparation, evaluation and compensation, but the proposals did not represent an interrelated suite of recommendations aligned to the full teaching continuum. At the same time, many districts are embarking on ambitious reform paths without having a framework to consider the broader effects and opportunities for these paths within the entire spectrum of the teacher pipeline in Texas.¹ This report from the Texas Teaching Commission outlines a coherent set of recommendations that, if implemented, should provide the state and districts with a framework for considering reform pathways that span the entire teaching continuum.

Figure A





ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This report presents the key findings and recommendations developed by the Texas Teaching Commission over the last year. It addresses the seven phases of the teaching continuum, grounding each phase in context (state, national and international), highlighting the challenges and issues in each phase, and presenting a series of interrelated statutory, regulatory, and district recommendations for improving the teaching continuum in Texas. The goal of this report is to implement policies that will lead to improved classroom instruction and student growth.

Over the course of a year, members of the Commission deliberated and worked to build consensus around the key set of recommendations included in this report. In a few instances, however, the Commissioners were unable to reach consensus. Dissenting opinions appear in certain sections of this report. Additionally, **although the report offers recommendations for each phase of the teaching continuum separately, the Commission considers these recommendations to be a package of interrelated and aligned actions that will be most effective if they are made in concert.** In every section, the report divides recommendations into three categories: statutory (Texas Legislature); regulatory/administrative (education agencies – TEA or THECB); and school district recommendations. The last section of the report presents an alignment summary of the recommendations.

Texas is ready to take the steps proposed in this report. The state has a history of bold and thoughtful action, and is the only state to achieve the full set of policies for college- and career-readiness, including aligned assessments used for accountability purposes and public reporting of statewide performance goals.ⁱⁱ With the Commission's recommendations in place, Texas teachers will be much better supported in preparing students for the new, more rigorous assessments and accountability measures that will demand the best that teachers have to give.

Recommendations in this report are intended to guide the state and local districts toward a more coherent and aligned teaching continuum.

TEACHING CONTINUUM RECOMMENDATIONS

Educators face many challenges in improving student success. Factors include but are not limited to: family income, school readiness, English-language proficiency, and overall availability of resources. But study after study shows that above all, the classroom teacher is the most important school-based factor in improving student achievement.ⁱⁱⁱ The purpose of the Commission's work is to recommend policies and practices that will help teachers improve student growth and learning.

"I am a teacher. I have answered my nation's call to redefine the future. I have been entrusted to nurture and develop our countries most precious resource: our children."

– Daniel Leija, former
Texas Teacher of the Year

Commission's Foundational Elements and Recommendations

Despite evidence that effective teachers clearly are essential, the systems and practices for attracting, training, assigning, compensating, and retaining educators often do not promote teacher effectiveness. In some cases, these systems, which were designed in a different era for a different teaching environment, actually *discourage* the improvement of teaching practices. **The Commission strongly recommends that Texas work strategically to connect these often disparate phases of a teacher's career and align them to key instructional goals and standards for effective teaching.**

In formulating recommendations for this report, the Commission believes that **all recommendations must be focused on improving student growth and learning.** Other core beliefs include the following:

- Teachers are the **most important** school-based factor in student achievement;
- Recommendations must **lift up, honor, and support** the teaching profession;
- Recommendations must honor **both local and state innovation** around the teaching continuum;
- **Collaboration** between teachers, school administrators, school board members and state and local policymakers is **critical** to the development of policies and practices around these recommendations;
- Administrator/principal training and a focus on **high-quality school and district leadership** are essential to effectively implementing any of these recommendations;
- **Expectations** for the teaching profession – in all phases of the teaching continuum – **must be clear and rigorous**; and
- Recommendations **should focus on the big moves** that can accelerate the work of teaching and learning.

Every part of the teaching continuum and the recommendations to improve it should be **anchored in high-quality standards for teaching practice.** The standards should provide the foundation for the human-capital system, and define a common and comprehensive understanding of what teachers should know and be able to do to facilitate student learning. This includes, but is not limited to, pedagogical knowledge, the skills needed to teach specific content to diverse populations of students, and continuous professional learning. Standards for teaching practice also should include: building a safe and equitable learning environment for students; communicating and collaborating with students, families, administrators and colleagues; and modeling personal integrity, ethics, and professionalism.

Policies regarding the teaching continuum should be anchored in and aligned to quality standards for teaching practice.

Finally, the standards should form the basis of all aspects of the teaching continuum.

With this in mind:

- Institutions and other entities that train and prepare educators should establish curricula and implement field experiences based on the expectations in the standards;
- Districts should recruit and hire teachers based on a teacher's ability to effectively meet the standards;
- Districts should deliver targeted induction programs anchored in the standards;
- The state (in its evaluation framework) and districts (through local design and implementation choices) should ensure that evaluation systems, especially the observation frameworks, are based on these standards;
- The TEA and school districts should align professional-development programs and services to the needs of teachers and principals as determined by their evaluations, identified needs, and opportunities for instructional leadership;
- The state and districts should consider differentiated compensation systems based in part on market-based strategies that address the state's teacher shortage areas – by region and content area; and
- Districts should design and create incentives for teacher leadership opportunities that recognize educators who meet or exceed specified standards.

Foundational Recommendation

The Texas Teaching Commission recommends that the TEA and State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) review the standards for teaching practice adopted by SBEC (*Proficiencies for Learner-Centered Instruction, 1994* – see below) and the state certification standards to ensure they reflect best practices in teaching and learning. The Commission understands TEA is in the midst of such a review. The Commission further recommends the review and any revision-recommendation development should be done in collaboration with current classroom teachers, and include an analysis of how the standards reflect both team and individual roles and accountability in academic performance. This process should lead the state to the adoption of clear, quality, and rigorous standards for teaching practice that form the foundation of all state teaching policies.

Proficiencies for Learner-Centered Instruction *(currently under review)*

PROFICIENCY #1: Learner-Centered Knowledge

The teacher possesses and draws on a rich knowledge base of content, pedagogy, and technology to provide relevant and meaningful learning experiences for all.

PROFICIENCY #2: Learner-Centered Instruction

To create a learner-centered community, the teacher collaboratively identifies needs, and plans, implements, and assesses instruction using technology and other resources.

PROFICIENCY #3: Equity in Excellence for all Learners

The teacher responds appropriately to diverse groups of learners.

PROFICIENCY #4: Learner-Centered Communication

While acting as an advocate for all students and the school, the teacher demonstrates effective professional and interpersonal communication skills.

PROFICIENCY #5: Learner-Centered Professional Development

The teacher, as a reflective practitioner dedicated to all students' success, demonstrates a commitment to learn, to improve the profession, and to maintain professional ethics and personal integrity.

The next sections of the Commission’s report outline current challenges, trends, and examples of best practices, and provides recommendations for each area of the teaching continuum. Themes woven throughout the recommendations include:

- The state should refine the current standards or develop new high-quality standards or guidelines that outline clear and aligned expectations for teachers at each phase of the teaching continuum;
- Embedded professional learning is critical to the success of the teaching field and student success, and should be purposefully included in preparation experiences, induction programs, and ongoing development of teachers;
- The state and districts should focus on school climate in an ongoing and deliberate way in order to support the recruitment, retention, and evaluation of teachers;
- The state and districts should consider policies that allow for the differentiation of salaries, incentives, and support to attract and retain effective teachers;
- The state and districts should identify, develop, and implement leadership pathways that allow teachers to grow in their own practice, to support and mentor colleagues, and to maximize student learning; and
- The state and districts should be informed by and when possible **work in collaboration with classroom teachers** who both understand the challenges of the profession and recognize the urgent need to improve student outcomes. Whenever possible, the effect of teacher teams should be considered when developing policies around evaluation and compensation.

The Commission firmly believes that the ability to effectively implement the following recommendations is dependent upon the state’s adoption of high-quality standards for teaching practice as the foundation for this entire set of recommendations.



SETTING THE COURSE FOR GREAT TEACHERS

Section 1: Recruitment and Preparation

OVERVIEW OF RECRUITMENT AND PREPARATION INTO THE PROFESSION

The world's top-performing nations proactively recruit individuals who have the potential to be great teachers even before they start their training.^{iv} Teaching positions in these countries are in high-demand and are greatly sought-after because of the cultural respect for teachers and the opportunity to earn a salary competitive with other valued professions. These nations identify top performers in high school and college, and strategically target recruitment efforts. A McKinsey and Co. study found that only 23 percent of new teachers in the United States come from the top third of their academic cohort; in Singapore, Finland, and South Korea, 100 percent come from the top third.^v

These international comparisons suggest that U.S. preparation programs are not able to choose from a pool of teacher candidates that includes enough of our best students.^{vi} Although Texas does not have significant recruitment efforts at the state level, the state does show promise in increasing the quality of candidates who pursue teaching as a profession. The National Council on Teacher Quality's 2011 State Teacher Policy Yearbook notes that Texas requires traditional undergraduate teacher-preparation programs – which train over 70 percent of new-teacher hires – to admit only students who meet relatively high standards. While high standards alone will not entice the very best students to apply, they convey an important message about the intellectual rigor required in the profession.

State and district fiscal challenges compound recruitment in Texas because funding for incentive programs has been reduced or eliminated. As a result of budget cuts, some districts have reduced their total number of



teachers rather than actively recruited new talent. Additionally, the Texas Legislature in 2010 reduced by 91 percent the budget for TEACH for Texas, the state's primary recruitment program. Funding for the state's Careers to Classrooms Program, which offers grants to support teacher certification in high-needs areas, also has been reduced.

While state support is important, localized approaches often produce innovative and effective recruitment strategies. Texas is home to one of the most unique programs in the nation: UTeach. UTeach was launched in 1997 at the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) and is a national model for recruiting into the teaching profession students who are pursuing science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) majors. Participants in the UTeach program earn two credentials: a degree in a major related to the content they intend to teach and a secondary teacher certification. The program is addressing a shortage of teachers qualified to teach science and math, and is proving successful with 620 students enrolled in the program at UT Austin this year.^{vii} UTeach has been replicated at seven sites in Texas and on 33 college campuses in 16 states across the country.^{viii}

Traditional teacher-preparation routes in higher education typically require students to develop subject matter expertise through their college or departments of arts and sciences, and pedagogical knowledge through their college or departments of education. Generally, these programs culminate with students teaching in a classroom setting for a few weeks to a semester or more. Over the past two decades, there has been a proliferation of alternative preparation programs that appeal to non-traditional teaching candidates who may not have studied education in college or graduate school.

CURRENT STATUS OF RECRUITMENT AND PREPARATION IN TEXAS

Texas state statutes and SBEC policies mold the quality of teacher preparation in various ways, including:

- Setting standards for what is taught in traditional preparation programs;
- Regulating alternative certification programs; and
- Requiring all preparation programs to meet standards for quality to be approved.

Preparation curriculum requirements, mandated by SBEC, ensure that teacher preparation programs provide instruction on a variety of items aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), including an emphasis on subject matter and pedagogical knowledge. These requirements include completion of student teaching, clinical teaching, or internship experience.

Each of these requirements contributes to preparing teachers for the profession, but national research suggests this may not be enough to equip beginning teachers with the practical knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the classroom.^{ix} Beyond being grounded in standards of teaching practice, teachers need high-quality, embedded training on how to teach a diverse student body with varying learning needs. While SBEC rules concerning teacher preparation curriculum do address the teaching skills needed for "special populations," a clearer standard of what this entails, coupled with a minimum requirement in the coursework rules, would improve the likelihood that teacher candidates would receive meaningful training to meet this important need (see R-4). The Commission understands the TEA is conducting committee meetings on this topic to create more performance indicators and content for curriculum areas that are much deeper and more outcome-driven than those that currently exist. The changes recommended by the committees will be made during the 2013-2014 school year.

Strengths of Teacher Preparation and Recruitment in Texas

- Preparation curricula requirements are aligned to critical teacher skills.
- Starting in 2012, the state will measure the effect recent graduates of educator- preparation programs – traditional and alternative – have on student achievement. This information will position the state and its higher-education institutions to drive continuous improvement in preparation programs.
- Alternative preparation routes are held to the same accountability standards as traditional programs.
- There is a relatively high bar for admission to traditional teacher-preparation programs.

REGULATING ALTERNATIVE PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Alternative teacher-preparation routes have flourished nationally for a number of reasons, including a desire to move pre-service candidates into the classroom quickly, the need for training that emphasizes practical classroom knowledge, and the need for more deliberate development of teacher cohorts that serve as learning communities and support groups for new teachers. Texas permits districts, education service centers, for-profit and non-profit organizations, community colleges and universities to administer alternative route programs. Data provided by the TEA show that approximately 23 percent of teachers employed in Texas for the 2010 school year received certification from alternative programs. However, since fiscal year 2005, alternative routes have produced the largest number of certified teachers. These programs need to adhere to the same high-quality standards SBEC requires of traditional programs (referred to below).

REQUIRING AND MONITORING QUALITY

Texas is moving to improve the quality of its teacher-preparation programs through its Accountability System for Educator Preparation. Senate Bill 174 (2009) created four measures for quality (see bullets below). When these are fully implemented, preparation programs will be able to share cohort data on how their students fare on certification exams, perform as beginning teachers based on an evaluation system, affect student learning and more. A graduate's effect on student learning will be determined through a value-added measure developed through work started at The University of Texas at Austin's LBJ School and now being developed by the American Institutes for Research (AIR). Additionally, preparation programs will be subject to "consumer information" requirements that make data on outcomes for preparation program graduates available to prospective teacher candidates and districts for use in program selection and staff-recruitment decisions.

Specifically, the new accountability system for teacher-preparation programs established under Senate Bill 174 mandates four quality measures:

- *Certification exams* — Each preparation program is required to have an 80 percent overall pass rate (up from 75 percent) on certification exams taken by their teacher candidates for the previous school year to retain their accreditation. Preparation programs with passing rates below the standard risk losing accreditation.
- *Principal assessment of new teachers* — Texas principals are required to complete surveys gauging the effectiveness of new teachers from each preparation program.
- *Impact on student achievement* — Design of a new metric to measure the influence of new teachers (those with three years of experience or less) on student achievement; the metric will include measures of growth in student performance, observations of teachers, principal appraisals, and school-wide growth in student performance.
- *Frequency, duration and quality of field supervision* — Exiting teacher candidate surveys provide data on the frequency, duration, and quality of preparation program field supervision.^x

Employed Teachers by Preparation Route

Year: 2010

Total: 317,829

Alternative Certification: 23.0%

Traditional Programs: 69.78%

Other Routes: 7.2%

A VISION FOR RECRUITMENT AND PREPARATION

Based on a review of research, national trends, and Texas context, the Texas Teaching Commission articulated a vision for a high-quality and cohesive teacher-recruitment and -preparation system made up of the following key principles:

- Teacher-preparation programs should **recruit the highest-quality candidates** to pursue the profession;
- All teacher-preparation programs should be held to the same **high-quality standards**, regardless of the type of program (traditional, alternative, etc.);
- Preparation programs **should provide practical teaching experiences** that truly prepare candidates to meet high-quality standards and contribute to K-12 student learning immediately upon placement in their initial teaching assignments;
- Teacher-preparation programs should be a **university-wide priority** – not just within the education departments – on every campus offering preparation programs;
- Since teachers grow by practicing their craft over time, **preparation programs and districts should work together** to support teachers in this journey; and
- Preparation programs should review the performance of their graduates in the classroom to **refine their programs** and provide support to individual graduates. Preparation programs should **provide transition support** for new teachers over their first three years in the classroom.

The Commission encourages every preparation program, including alternative preparation routes, to work with school districts to:

- Recruit high-quality candidates to the field of teaching, particularly in areas of identified need (special education, math, science, etc.);
- Grow the teaching corps in Texas to better mirror the diversity of Texas students;
- Ensure that candidates have both depth of content knowledge and pedagogical understanding;
- Prepare teachers to support student learning immediately upon their entry into the field; and
- Ensure that all preparation programs prepare teacher candidates to an expected level of practice, understanding that new teachers will develop and grow in their first years in the classroom.

Therefore, the Commission recommends the following actions be taken:

STATUTORY RECOMMENDATIONS

S-1 The legislature should continue to require the **evaluation of all teacher-preparation programs** to review the impact of program graduates on student learning.

S-2 The legislature should ensure that the state’s teacher-preparation programs – traditional and alternative – provide **an opportunity for clinical experience** (such as a teacher residency program) for its students. The clinical experience should include exposure to academic content standards and assessments, classroom management, and teacher evaluation expectations.

S-3 The legislature should **raise entry standards for alternative-certification program candidates** by including a minimum undergraduate GPA (to align with SBEC rules) and a minimum of 18 credit hours in the content area for which a certificate is being sought. For candidates seeking a generalist certificate that covers multiple subjects, standards should require demonstration of proficiency in each core subject covered by the certification exam, rather than simply an overall passing score. The legislature should require TEA/SBEC to allow a student teacher to **retake the teaching exam after 45 days** (instead of 60 days) in consultation with the preparation provider.

S-4 The legislature should amend current statute (21.044) to require teacher-preparation programs to **educate teacher candidates about:**

- the **skills and responsibilities** required of teachers and **high expectations** for students;
- Texas’ teacher supply-and-demand realities;
- preparation-program performance data over time;
- the importance of building strong **classroom management skills**; and
- the state’s framework for **teacher and principal evaluation**.

S-5 The legislature should require the TEA/SBEC and the THECB to **develop and implement new standards** for teacher-preparation and alternative-certification programs that reflect updated standards for teaching practice.

REGULATORY/ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

R-1 The THECB and the TEA should jointly produce **high-quality standards for teacher-preparation programs** that align to the standards for teaching practice, as well as tiered entry points for different kinds of candidates to enter programs that lead to consistently high-quality outcomes.

R-2 The THECB should identify and publish characteristics of successful teacher candidates – not just knowledge and skills – and **intentionally recruit these types of candidates into preparation programs** through processes such as clearly communicating targeted information about becoming a teacher in Texas and streamlining application processes (see examples of UTeach on page 11 and Teach for America on page 16).

R-3 The THECB and the TEA should **broker partnerships with local districts and institutions of higher education** to better align the needs of school districts with the knowledge and skills student teachers need after graduating from their preparation programs.

R-4 The TEA/SBEC should revise the SBEC rules concerning teacher-preparation curriculum **to include a clearer standard of what is required to prepare candidates to work with “special populations,”** and set a minimum requirement in the coursework rules to improve the likelihood that teacher candidates receive meaningful training to meet this important need. *[the TEA/SBEC should consider this recommendation in their ongoing committee meetings to revise Chapter 228.]*

DISTRICT POLICY/PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

D-1 Districts should work with preparation programs that serve the district, and develop a plan to **help high-school students more explicitly explore and understand the teaching profession** – particularly teaching in subjects and geographic areas of need. This work should tie into the state’s recruitment initiative (see R-2).

D-2 Districts should provide **high-school students with pathways** into the teaching profession that include early college credit.

D-3 Districts should design local messaging on the need for recruiting, preparing and supporting great teachers in the community, and **create a brand/campaign** around what it is like to teach in the district (e.g., “Working in Austin: The Toughest Job You’ll Ever Love,” or “Calling all Mentors,” or “You don’t have to go far to make a world of difference”).

D-4 Districts should facilitate stronger **relationships between high schools and colleges of education** by encouraging teams of college faculty and K-12 teachers within teacher-preparation programs to collaboratively design courses and programs to meet the needs of K-12 students.



Section 2: Hiring

OVERVIEW OF HIRING

As in most states, hiring is primarily a district function in Texas. The role of the state mainly centers on supporting districts' implementation of effective hiring practices and assisting districts with recruitment initiatives. Generally, districts recruit applicants, manage application processes, interview prospective teachers, hire qualified candidates, and determine school-placement decisions. New teachers begin to learn about a district's values and norms the moment they begin the hiring process. The timing and structure of the interview, the questions districts ask or do not ask, and the information potential hires are given by the district all reveal details about the focus and goals of the district and/or school. Without a thoughtful and efficient hiring process in place, districts miss a key opportunity to use the hiring process to educate potential hires about the district's mission, values, resources and community. By carefully considering how they have hired and placed new teachers, districts can produce better matches between new teachers and the schools in which they are placed.

The ability to hire and retain the right people is a key characteristic of a high-performing organization. However, models for outstanding teacher selection remain relatively scarce.^{xi} Current research supports the idea that certain observable teacher attributes positively influence student academic achievement.^{xii} Knowledge of these attributes can help education leaders and policymakers offer statewide guidance around hiring policies and recruitment strategies, since the costs of hiring the wrong candidates can be extensive in terms of supplementary training, wasted salary, adverse public reactions, and lost productivity. States must set clear criteria for finding and hiring promising new teachers if they are to build and sustain cultures of excellence.

Research indicates that effective teachers share many of the same characteristics, regardless of school resources or student population. They are fully certified, have in-depth subject and pedagogical knowledge, and several years of experience.^{xiii} Teach for America has studied the effectiveness of their teachers and has found that the most effective teachers have the following attributes:

- A deep belief in the potential of all students and a commitment to do whatever it takes to expand opportunities for students;
- Demonstrated leadership ability and superior interpersonal skills to motivate others;
- Strong achievement in academic, professional, extracurricular and/or volunteer settings;
- Perseverance in the face of challenges, ability to adapt to changing environments, and a strong desire to do whatever it takes to improve and develop;
- Excellent critical thinking skills, including the ability to accurately link cause and effect and to generate relevant solutions to problems;
- Superior organizational ability, including planning well and managing responsibilities effectively; and
- Respect for individuals' diverse experiences and the ability to work effectively with people from a variety of backgrounds.^{xiv}

This information can aid policymakers in seeking better ways to improve teacher quality, and help districts and schools understand that no regulation, no matter how sound, can replace the need for schools to screen prospective teachers carefully. Well-designed policies based on good research will increase the odds that the individuals who make it through the process will be effective teachers.^{xv}

CURRENT STATUS OF HIRING IN TEXAS

Although hiring practices in Texas are almost exclusively under the jurisdiction of local Texas school districts, the state does offer policy guidance in this area. The following hiring expectations promulgated by the State Board of Education (SBOE) set minimum hiring expectations for teachers. To be eligible for certification in Texas, prospective teachers must:

- Complete a bachelor's degree;
- Complete an educator-preparation program;
- Pass appropriate certification exam(s);
- Submit a state application; and
- Submit to a background check and be fingerprinted.^{xvi}

A VISION FOR HIRING

The Commission believes making informed and timely hiring decisions — as early as possible in the process — is critical in ensuring the placement of qualified and effective teaching candidates. With this in mind, local districts should provide transparent information to candidates on the school culture and climate in the buildings where they will work. **Emphasizing early hiring-date opportunities is key to developing the highest quality pool of applicants.**

Strengths of Texas Hiring Practices

- Online state job database increases opportunity for good teacher-district fit.
- Statewide recruitment efforts such as Teach for Texas offer accelerated teacher preparation.

The Commission recommends the following actions be taken:

STATUTORY RECOMMENDATIONS

S-6 The legislature should **explore the refinement and restoration of funding for loan-incentive programs, such as the Teach for Texas Loan Repayment program**, to include a “Texas Teacher Tomorrow” fund. Teachers who have taught for over ten years would be eligible for this program designed to provide loan-forgiveness for such teachers’ children and teachers’ willing to teach shortage-area subjects.

S-7 The legislature should **provide economic incentives for teachers who agree to serve in high teacher shortage areas** and in hard-to-staff teaching positions (see S-17).

DISTRICT POLICY/PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

D-5 Districts should **review district hiring processes**, including hiring timelines, hiring needs of individual schools, contractual requirements of hiring and placement, and master schedule expectations. Districts should:

- Use the review to identify obstacles in the hiring process and move the hiring timeline up to recruit top-tier talent;
- Create economic incentives for teachers to notify the district as early as possible when they do not plan to renew contracts;
- Identify schools with teacher shortages in high-need subject areas, and provide targeted support and resources to school administrators and teachers. Possible interventions include early access to top-tier candidates and signing bonuses for hard-to-staff campuses; and
- Develop and implement early hiring processes that will enable districts to recruit in the fall and hire new teachers in the spring.

“The hiring date of a teacher is one of the best predictors of their effectiveness.”

—Ann Best, former
Human Resource
Director at Houston ISD



SUPPORTING PROFESSIONALS IN THEIR PRACTICE

Section 3: Inducting

OVERVIEW OF INDUCTION

The teacher retention statistics are harsh: as many as half of all new teachers will leave the profession within the first five years.^{xvii} Though several factors influence teacher retention – including an acceptance of multiple career moves among members of Generation Y and a lack of competitive salary options for teaching – it is clear that working conditions and support in the first few years of teaching correlate with retention. Most new teachers in the U.S. do not receive high-quality mentoring or induction, and little attention is given to which assignments teachers receive.^{xviii} In fact, it is often the schools struggling most – those with exceptionally large percentages of economically disadvantaged students, English-language learners, or students with disabilities – that have the highest percentages of new teachers. Despite the fact that many districts have some type of induction system in place, “the evidence on most of them is quite mixed, in part because few are structured around a vision of good instructional practices.”^{xix}

Some states and districts are attempting to reinvent new-teacher induction. For example, San Francisco Public Schools places cohorts of new teachers in struggling schools and provides master teacher mentoring for the cohort to work together to improve student success.^{xx} Connecticut implemented a strategic induction program based on its teaching standards. The Teacher Education And Mentoring (TEAM) program is a two- to three-year program that provides mentors for cohorts of beginning teachers who work together to complete a series of modules that make up the state’s “Common Core of Teaching.”^{xxi} California’s Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) funds local districts to design induction programs aligned to a nationally recognized set of high-quality standards known as the Standards for Quality and Effectiveness for Professional Teacher Induction Programs. Many states have induction laws on the books, but do not sustain adequate funding to pay high-quality mentors and implement high-quality induction. Both Connecticut and California can serve as models for other states looking to improve their induction strategies.

In high-quality induction programs, state policy creates a supportive context and establishes a strong expectation that comprehensive support will be provided to every beginning teacher. Research suggests that comprehensive, multi-year induction programs reduce the rate of new-teacher attrition, accelerate the professional growth of new teachers, provide a positive return on investment, and improve student learning.^{xxii} The New Teacher Center (NTC) reviewed state policies on teacher induction.^{xxiii} For each state, NTC summarized existing policies related to **ten key criteria most critical to high-quality induction and mentoring support for beginning educators:**

- | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Teachers Served | 3. Program Standards | 6. Mentor Assignment and Caseload |
| 2. Administrators Served | 4. Mentor Selection | 7. Program Delivery |
| | 5. Mentor Training | 8. Funding |
| | | 9. Educator Accountability |
| | | 10. Program Accountability |

Strengths of Texas Induction Practices

- Defined mentor-selection process.
- Required mentor training.
- Manageable mentor caseloads.
- Allocated release time for mentors.
- Articulated induction program parameters.
- Monitored induction programs continuously improved through annual evaluations.

Efforts to specifically improve new-teacher induction, and teacher effectiveness generally, must address teacher working conditions, including the critical role of school leadership, opportunities for teacher leadership and collaboration, and customized professional development. These efforts, along with strong induction standards, significantly influence teachers' chances of success.^{xxiv} The New Teacher Center promotes the following sets of standards to include in every district induction program:

- **Foundational standards** that include: program vision and goals; engagement of administration, principals, and site leaders; and program assessment, evaluation, and accountability with a focus on continuous improvement;
- **Structural standards** that include: mentor roles and responsibilities; teacher assessment and learning communities; professional development for beginning teachers; and
- **Instructional standards** that focus on instructional practice, equity, and universal access.^{xxv}

High-quality induction programs can help provide the specialized support needed by new teachers in challenging environments, and they can also support the transformation of hard-to-staff schools into strong professional communities.

CURRENT STATUS OF INDUCTION IN TEXAS

There are several induction programs in Texas. State statute (§21.458) allows for all beginning teachers (with two years or less experience) to be assigned a trained mentor teacher. New teachers must participate in teacher orientation, which *may* include specialized induction activities (2009).^{xxvi} The Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring System (BTIMS) program was established to increase retention of beginning teachers. The program allows for grant funds to be used for mentor stipends, training, and release time to meet and observe beginning teachers. The state funding for the BTIMS program has decreased dramatically over the past two years.

Another model used in several districts is the Texas Beginning Educators Support System (TxBESS). TxBESS is not currently funded at the state level, although certain regional service providers offer the program at cost. Finally, the TEA also recognizes the online program *Performance-based Academic Coaching Team* (PACT) as a novice-teacher support system available to educators in 2012-2013. PACT provides new teachers with resources, tools, chat rooms, and electronic mentors or eMentors.

A VISION FOR INDUCTION

The Commission believes induction — with an emphasis on strengthening standards for teacher mentors — is important for ensuring a smooth transition for new teachers into the classroom. A successful transition increases the likelihood that new teachers will remain in the profession for longer periods of time. To achieve this goal, the state and local districts should better align supports and incentives for new teachers as well as the experienced educators who help lead the induction process. Finally, quality induction programs should encompass at least the first three years of teachers' time in the classroom, and the state should provide funding to allow districts to deliver these programs with fidelity.

The Commission recommends the following actions be taken:

STATUTORY RECOMMENDATIONS

S-8 The legislature should redesign the **BTIMS** (Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring System) **program to be a comprehensive system and should fund it appropriately**. Currently, BTIMS is restrictive because it addresses only one component of a larger system – the mentor. The legislature should appoint a committee, staffed by the TEA, to develop program guidelines for BTIMS that align the induction and mentoring system with expectations for new teachers based on the standards for teaching practice. The program should include release time for mentors and beginning teachers. The legislature should ensure sufficient funding allocations for BTIMS through the TEA, and the TEA should report to the legislature annually on the effectiveness of local programs.

REGULATORY/ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

R-5 The TEA should develop/adopt **high-quality induction-program standards** (tied to the standards for teaching practice) and require districts to submit plans for their induction (including mentoring) programs aligned to these standards.

R-6 The TEA should effectively **staff the committee responsible for developing program guidelines** for BTIMS (see S-8) by providing research and best practices, as well as recommendations for aligning the induction and mentoring program to expectations laid out in the quality standards developed/adopted by the TEA. The guidelines should include:

- Support teams for each beginning teacher;
- Training for support teams; and
- Program evaluation.

R-7 The TEA should develop policies and implement actions that would **align BTIMS to the standards for effective teaching and the teacher-evaluation system**.

DISTRICT POLICY/PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

D-6 Districts should require **mentoring for new teachers** through at least their first three years in the classroom.

D-7 Districts should review the use of existing Title II dollars and reallocate if necessary to provide appropriate **compensation to mentors**.

D-8 Districts should establish a **district-level advisory committee, which includes local teachers and principals**, to develop a beginning-teacher induction and mentoring plan based on the induction standards and the state guidelines, and submit the plan to the TEA for approval.

Section 4: Evaluating

OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION

Regardless of a given teacher's innate talent for teaching, the vast majority of teachers – just as professionals in any other field – need support and coaching at various stages of their career. However, teachers cannot improve if they don't know which skills or knowledge require attention, or do not understand how to improve them. Recently, many states are moving away from an historical evaluation system that rated virtually all teachers as satisfactory, offering little in the way of constructive criticism or supports on how to improve. Several states and a number of districts are improving their evaluation systems and incorporating student learning, formal observations, team collaborations, and professional responsibilities into teacher evaluations.

TNTP (formally The New Teacher Project) outlines six design principles that states and districts should use when reforming evaluation systems:

1. Evaluate teachers annually;
2. Provide clear, rigorous expectations based on competencies of instructional excellence;
3. Use multiple measures, including student achievement, in evaluations;
4. Use multiple ratings (not just satisfactory/unsatisfactory);
5. Provide regular feedback and specific supports based on evaluation results; and
6. Use evaluation results to inform key employment decisions.^{xxvii}

Developing effective evaluation systems is not an easy process. Today, most research-based evaluation systems depend primarily on observations that look at teachers' impact on the students (for example, high-quality observation rubrics ask observers to monitor what students are doing in addition to what the teacher is doing) and measures of student growth (assessment scores or value-added measures developed by the state). As a result, these categories are given greater weight than other areas, such as teacher content knowledge and professional responsibilities. States face significant barriers in developing and implementing new evaluation systems, ranging from garnering teacher support and addressing data weaknesses to combating a professional culture that has encouraged the status quo. But even small steps toward developing an effective evaluation system can reap significant rewards.

CURRENT STATUS OF EVALUATION IN TEXAS

Texas adopted its evaluation model – the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) – in 1996, and the system is used in 86 percent of districts.^{xxviii} The system is based on observations with minimal weighting for student growth and professional expectations, and includes eight domains to evaluate a teacher's effectiveness:

- Active, successful student participation in the learning process;
- Learning-centered instruction;
- Evaluation and feedback on student progress;
- Management of student discipline, instructional strategies, time, and materials;
- Professional communication;
- Professional development;
- Compliance with policies, operating procedures, and requirements; and
- Improvement of academic performance of all students on the campus.

Good evaluations identify excellent teachers and help teachers of all skill levels understand how they can improve; they encourage a school culture that prizes excellence and continual growth. Although there must be meaningful consequences for consistently poor performance, the primary purpose of evaluations should not be punitive.

TNTP, Evaluation 2.0

Former Commissioner Robert Scott set in motion the review of the PDAS system this year. To date the TEA has:

- Created a Teacher Effectiveness Workgroup with representatives from the Texas Comprehensive Center, ESC 13, and Educate Texas to guide and monitor work toward creating a new-teacher appraisal system;
- Created a Teacher Appraisal Advisory Committee, consisting of teacher and principal representatives from across Texas, to examine teacher-appraisal systems and recommend a teacher-appraisal framework;
- Implemented national model teacher-appraisal systems at 91 School Improvement Grant (SIG) campuses and other volunteer campuses to enhance understanding of best practices in teacher appraisal;
- Created a web site to explain the work to the public (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ei/pdas.aspx>);
- Met regularly with representatives of teacher and administrator organizations to ensure they were aware of the efforts to improve teacher appraisal; and
- Briefed the Texas Teaching Commission and attended its meetings.

Acting on a request from the TEA earlier this year, the Commission drafted guidance for the revision of PDAS. Most of those recommendations are also reflected in this report. The guidance was used by the Teacher Effectiveness Workgroup as it determined the most effective evaluation framework and model to build for districts.

A VISION FOR EVALUATION

Texas has an unprecedented opportunity to lead the country in the development of a statewide model for evaluation. The Texas Teaching Commission spent a great deal of time in discussions about design principles for the evaluation of teachers and in thoughtfully laying out a framework for a high-quality system that is much more robust and holistic than the current one.

The Commission focused on the following design principles for teacher evaluation when developing its guidance to the TEA early this year. These principles should be taken into consideration by the legislature and the TEA when designing and adopting policies regarding evaluation.

- The primary purpose for teacher evaluation in Texas must be to strengthen instructional practice in the classroom so that every child receives effective instruction.
- The Commission strongly believes that the state should require each district's evaluation system to include multiple components (classroom observations and feedback, student growth and learning, and professional engagement and growth) and multiple measures within the components to ensure fairness and reliability.
- The Commission offers its observations and guidance based on what it believes to be sound public policy supported by emerging best practices, Texas context and data, as well as research on effective teaching, evaluation, and support. While Texas faces financial challenges at both the state and district levels, the state must still set forth a strong and steady course for supporting teachers, and prioritize efforts that will support student learning and teacher practice.
- The Commission believes that during the pilot stage of any evaluation system, the use of state-mandated assessments as a factor in the student growth and learning component of a teacher's evaluation should be discouraged. Any assessment result used to evaluate teachers must be

Strengths of Evaluation in Texas

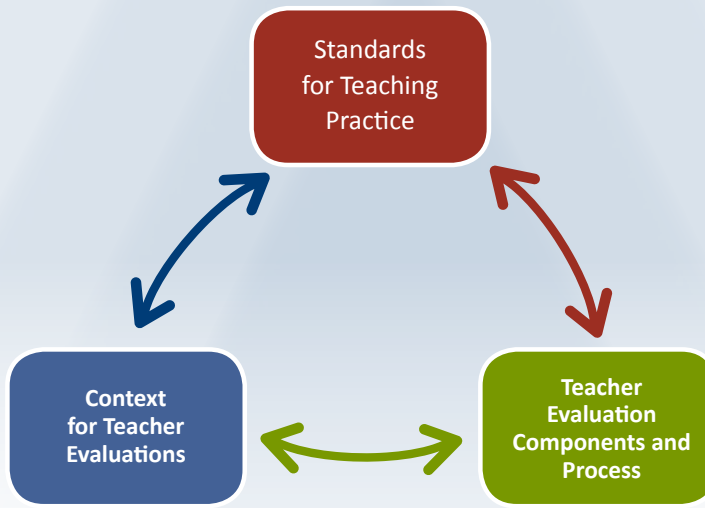
- Student academic performance is part of teacher evaluations.
- Rubrics for each domain include four categories of performance – a significant strength over binary observation ratings (e.g., meets/does not meet).
- The observation rubric includes student behavior in addition to teacher behavior.
- Appraisers must receive training and certification prior to evaluating teachers.
- The regional education service centers provide a venue for targeted and high-quality professional development for districts.
- Teachers receive written feedback on their performance.
- Teachers with unsatisfactory evaluations must have professional development plans aligned to their areas of weakness.

returned to the teacher as soon as possible so that instruction can be improved to benefit the students.

- The Commission believes that certain elements are necessary to ensure the success of a high-quality evaluation system (including financial and human resources, sustainable high-quality professional development, consistent and high-quality appraiser training, and a system design that employs multiple forms of measurement and data).
- Honoring both a state framework and local innovation is critical. The Commission believes that although the state should adopt a framework for evaluation and provide models to districts, districts across the state are innovators in this work. Districts should be permitted, supported, and encouraged to continue to seek innovative solutions that will inform their peer districts and state policy.
- Collaboration between local administration and teachers to create, adopt, and implement a teacher-evaluation system is essential to building trust in the system and providing a platform for long-term sustainability. Mechanisms (at the state and district level) to ensure this collaboration should be emphasized and implemented, such as requiring significant teacher involvement in the development of the system and monitoring the implementation and outcomes of the system at the district level.
- Any teacher evaluation model developed by the state needs to be piloted, validated, and refined. The results should be used to inform final statewide models. In addition, regular assessment of evaluation models is critical for continuous improvement of teacher evaluation once models have been adopted.
- Expectations for the teaching profession must be clear and rigorous, grounded in the standards for teaching practice, and should reflect the career stage of the teacher.
- Texas should implement a strong principal-evaluation system that is aligned with and includes components similar to those for teacher-evaluation systems, to create fairness and engender trust in the evaluation system.
- Making individual teacher-evaluation results public is bad public policy and should not be done in Texas. Teacher evaluations should remain confidential (pursuant to TEC section 21.355) and only used for appropriate purposes – to identify the support teachers need to become better at their craft and to inform other human-capital decisions in appropriate ways.

BUILDING AN EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The Commission envisions a state-level teacher-evaluation framework model that contains three interrelated sections:



This framework identifies the elements teacher-evaluation systems across Texas should have in common while maintaining mechanisms in current law for local districts to develop their own systems that incorporate these elements or adopt state-approved models. **The foundation of the framework, as it is with all phases of the teaching continuum, is the standards for teaching practice introduced on page ten.**

CONTEXT FOR TEACHER EVALUATIONS

The goals of a high-quality evaluation system are to assess and improve teaching and learning, resulting in higher student performance. The system should serve as a differentiated tool for improvement, feedback, and support to assist teachers in serving all students at an agreed-upon teaching standard. In addition, once high-quality evaluation systems are put in place, evaluations should be the driving tool used to inform employment and career decisions when viewed over the course of more than one year.

To accomplish this, **a fully developed evaluation system must go further than it has in the past and be linked to a system of support for teachers.** Teacher evaluation should serve as both a formative and summative tool to identify strengths and areas for further development for all teachers working in Texas classrooms in a way that is fair, valid, transparent and legally defensible. Given this, the system should:

- **Incorporate teacher self-assessment** that both reflects upon professional teaching practice and recognizes additional commitments to the school, district, and students;
- Include **rigorous appraiser training and monitoring** on an ongoing basis for inter-rater reliability and the effectiveness of the feedback provided by appraisers;
- Provide **distinct information on teacher strengths and weaknesses**, making it clear where to focus support;
- Align **supports and professional learning opportunities to evaluation results** designed to improve instruction and practice in specific areas;
- Provide a **continuum of support** to all teachers based upon the teacher's ability to meet established teaching standards and their career stage (i.e., novice, mid-career, high-performing, etc.);

- Include a **goal-setting component** – for student and teacher metrics – to be mutually developed by teachers and their supervisors; and
- **Align evaluation results with human-capital decision-making and established teacher career pathways** in order to maximize a teacher’s positive impact on student learning.

In building or adopting a teacher-evaluation system, the Commission believes that the following are important:

- **Collaboration between local administration and teachers to develop, adopt, implement, and monitor a teacher-evaluation system is essential.** It is important for all involved to manage the development or adoption of an evaluation system within an agreed-upon timeline. In addition, this collaboration should continue throughout implementation to both refine and enhance the system and its use; and
- **Evaluations for teachers, administrators and other staff working with students should be linked in a way that emphasizes the core work of schools: teaching and learning.** A teacher-evaluation system linked to overall district goals is important, but only as part of an overall approach to evaluation. For example, strong principal-evaluation provisions, inclusive of building performance and aligned with teacher evaluation, can increase trust in the system.

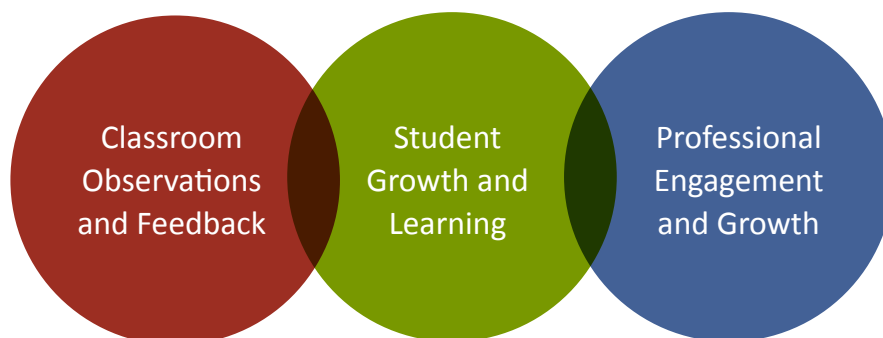
Professional context describes the school’s teaching and learning conditions as they exist at the time of the evaluation. A procedure for assessing a school’s current professional context and a link to the teacher-evaluation system should be in place, including an alignment with teaching and learning conditions essential for good teaching practices and, ultimately, student learning. Data should guide decisions about how to improve a school’s teaching and learning conditions. Elements of the professional context include: time, school climate and safety, school leadership, facilities and resources, discipline support and teacher leadership.

TEACHER EVALUATION COMPONENTS AND PROCESS

For the purposes of the Commission’s recommendations regarding teacher evaluation, a teacher is defined as “an educator who is employed by a school district and who, not less than an average of four hours each day, teaches in an academic instructional setting or a career and technology instructional setting. The term does not include a teacher’s aide or a full-time administrator” (TEC 5.001). The Commission also includes those educators who meet this definition but are employed by an open-enrollment charter school.

What should be evaluated?

Teacher evaluations should be **based on multiple measures** that are easily understood, transparent, job-related, and observable. In combination, the measures should also be valid, reliable, and objective to the extent possible. After reviewing current research and hearing from teachers currently involved in evaluation systems (Austin, Dallas, Houston, Hillsborough County), **the Commission recommends including the following components in the teacher-evaluation system:**



Where are evaluations developed and how are the evaluations implemented?

The state should provide an overarching structure or framework for the teacher-evaluation system based on promising practices and research. At the same time, the system may be locally driven and should encourage innovation. At the local level, it is critical that teachers and administrators create or adopt the measures collaboratively, and continue to engage in shaping and refining their evaluation model. This authentic engagement promotes the fairness, credibility, and sustainability of the system and its link to support.

The districts should make certain that **multiple appraisers** participate in a rigorous **certification process** to ensure high-quality inter-rater reliability and their ability to provide valuable feedback to teachers. The state should provide a **model training program** for the teacher-evaluation system it develops to support those districts with limited capacity to do so on their own. Districts should have an option of having their appraisers participate in state training and certification programs, or developing localized versions. The state should also develop strong state standards for initial and ongoing training that districts will meet. Training should occur at least once a year to ensure promising practices and lessons learned are articulated and widely shared.

When should evaluations take place?

The Commission recommends that **evaluations occur annually for all teachers**. More importantly, the Commission encourages the state and local districts to create a **“healthy culture of evaluation”** where all educators and staff are striving to help each other improve for the **benefit of each and every student**. Observations, data, coaching conversations, and support should be used in an ongoing effort to help teachers grow in their practice. Various components of the evaluation, such as **observations and walk-throughs, should occur more frequently than the formal annual evaluation**, especially for new or struggling teachers. The state models should also allow local districts to differentiate the timing and scope of each component of the evaluation system based on a teacher’s ability to meet teaching standards and the career stage of the teacher.

What is included in an evaluation framework?

The Commission recommends that each component within the evaluation structure include multiple measures (more than one in each component) to assess a teacher’s effectiveness. The state should develop a model that incorporates these measures, but allow districts to adapt their own structure as long as all components and multiple measures are included.

The Commission proposed the following possible measures for each component. This list is not exclusive, and the state and local districts should work with teachers to develop the best measurements for each component.

Classroom Observations and Feedback

- Formal observations – need to happen at least annually with differentiation on the number of times per year based on the teacher’s ability to meet teaching standards, not on experience
- Walk-throughs – should happen multiple times per year, with timely feedback returned to the teacher
- Peer feedback – by trained, high-performing educator
- Student feedback

The Commission recommends using multiple appraisers to the extent practicable for observations and feedback. The Commissioners also recommend that feedback contain specific suggestions for improvement, as well as identified resources to use

Student Growth and Learning

- Individual student-learning objectives
- Team student-learning objectives
- Classroom artifacts or student portfolios
- District/Teacher-developed assessments
- Campus-level value-added scores
- State assessments and/or statewide measures for growth*

**There is concern among some Commission members regarding the validity of using these measures at the individual teacher level for teacher evaluation. This is especially true regarding state assessments and statewide measures.*

Professional Engagement and Growth

State/District-developed rubric that focuses on the level of professional engagement in:*

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establishing professional goals• Participating in professional learning• Applying learning to classroom practice• Engaging in meaningful collaboration• Complying with district/school policies and procedures• Modeling professional integrity | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher self-assessments to inform the rubric (see above)• School teaching and learning conditions (time to collaborate, school climate and safety, school leadership, facilities and resources, discipline support, teacher involvement in decision-making, and teacher leadership) as assessed via a teacher climate survey |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**adapted from Austin ISD’s model*

How should the components be weighted?

The Commission believes that student growth and learning is one of the most essential components in a teacher's evaluation. The Commission also believes that the other two components recommended in this report – “classroom observations and feedback” and “professional engagement and growth” – assist teachers in helping students reach that growth. Therefore, to ensure a well-balanced evaluation system, the **Commission recommends that 25-50 percent of the evaluation be based upon multiple measures of student growth and learning** (see R-8). At the same time, districts should consider this weighting to be purposefully designed to encourage teamwork in schools by including student growth measured at the building level and not just for the individual teacher.

There are also some Commissioners who want to strongly caution the state and districts to avoid relying too heavily on measures based on students' scores on state standardized tests for the following reasons:

1. There are differing opinions on the utility of “value-added” measures of student growth that are based on students' scores on state standardized tests; and
2. The Commission is mindful of the current public backlash against current high-stakes testing in Texas and is concerned about the potential impact any change could have on an evaluation system that is heavily dependent on it.

For these reasons, and as previously stated, the Commission recommends that the student growth and learning component of the teacher-evaluation system be comprised of multiple measures and **under no circumstances should standardized-test-based measures of student performance become the primary factor** in the student growth and learning component of a teacher's evaluation.

How can the evaluation help determine career decisions?

The Commission believes that the evaluation system should have an effect on a teacher's career path. Specifically, the Commissioners agree that the evaluation should serve a number of purposes, including:

- Aligning professional development to help teachers improve classroom instruction;
- Identifying high-performing teachers and those positioned to serve as mentor teachers; and
- Basing human-capital decisions **on consecutive evaluations, when possible, and over multiple years (more than one) of performance.** These decisions, such as promotion, increased compensation, or termination, should never be based on a single data snapshot.

To summarize, the following recommendations are being encouraged by the Commission regarding evaluation of teachers in Texas:

STATUTORY RECOMMENDATIONS

S-9 The legislature should require the TEA to provide a teacher-evaluation framework that includes: (1) standards for teaching practice; (2) context for teacher evaluations; and (3) teacher-evaluation components and process (see above). This framework should identify the elements that teacher-evaluation systems across Texas will have in common. It should also **maintain mechanisms in current law for local districts to develop their own systems** that incorporate these elements, and provide a set of evaluation models districts could choose to adopt. The framework should be grounded in the principle that **the primary goal of a high-quality evaluation system is to assess and improve teaching and learning, resulting in higher student performance.** The framework should also require evaluations to be based on **multiple measures** that are easily understood, transparent, job-related, and observable. Finally, the framework should incorporate **multiple measures within**

each component (see above), and allow districts to adopt their own structures, as long as each component and multiple measures are included.

S-10 The legislature should require districts to use consecutive evaluations from multiple years (more than one), as available, to inform employment and career decisions.

S-11 The legislature should continue to **require all teachers to be evaluated annually**. Various components of the evaluation, such as observations and walk-throughs, should occur more frequently than the formal annual evaluation, especially for new or struggling teachers. The legislature should find ways to encourage districts to differentiate the timing and scope of each component of the evaluation system based on a teacher's ability to meet teaching standards and the career stage of the teacher.

S-12 The legislature should require districts to **communicate results from evaluations to the teacher** in a timely manner to ensure it is used as a developmental tool.

REGULATORY/ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

R-8 To ensure a well-balanced evaluation system, **the TEA should require a range between 25-50 percent of every evaluation be based on multiple measures of student growth and learning within its model framework**. Under no circumstances should standardized-test-based measures of student performance become the primary factor in the student growth and learning component of a teacher's evaluation. The Commission believes that "student growth and learning" is one of the most essential components in a teacher's evaluation, and multiple measures of student growth and learning should be included as a component in the evaluation system. The Commission also believes that "classroom observations and feedback" and "professional engagement and growth" should be included to assist teachers in helping students succeed.

Dissenting Comments:

- **Priscilla Aquino-Garza, Stand for Children-Texas** – It is a requirement we feel should be established by the legislature in order to establish the priority of students growth and learning in the state's teacher evaluation framework.
- **Mike Boone** – I fully support the Commission's recommendation that in evaluating the performance of a teacher, meaningful weight should be given to student growth. After all, the primary responsibility of a teacher is to effectively educate students. However, I differ from the view that a weighting component should be based solely on the measurements of student growth achieved in the individual teacher's classroom. Instead, I am of the opinion that it should be based also on the student growth achieved at the school building level of which the teacher is a part. For example, I believe the multiple measures of an individual teacher's evaluation should include between 20%-30% based on student growth measured at the teacher's building or team level and a 20%-30% based on student growth measured at the individual teacher's classroom level. I believe it is good public policy to promote a culture of teamwork in our schools that would lead to greater teacher effectiveness. It is true that people working together as a team accomplish more than individuals working alone. As the old adage says: "None of us are as smart or as effective individually as all of us working together as a team for a common purpose." For me, linking the evaluation of individual teachers together through the campus team approach would be a strategic move for school districts. My approach would incentivize teachers to help each other be successful in the classroom and they would be motivated to hold each other personally accountable for the team's performance. I fear that mandating individual student growth for individual teachers without a team component will create multiple silos of teaching professionals in a school building rather than teamwork.

Dissenting Comments, continued:

Without doubt, the Commission's recommendation that meaningful weight be given to student growth is of significant importance. However, that step will have an even greater impact on Texas public schools if it is also purposefully designed to encourage teamwork in our schools as outlined above. This special opportunity to encourage teachers to work together as a team for the common purpose of improving growth in student learning is a very powerful step that we should not let pass.

R-9 The TEA should **review the standard domains in PDAS** to ensure that they reflect best practices in teaching and learning, and are connected to the standards for teaching practice.

R-10 Teacher evaluation should **serve as both a formative and summative tool** to identify strengths and areas for further development for all teachers working in Texas classrooms in a way that is fair, valid, transparent, and legally defensible. Given this, the TEA should develop a model framework that:

- Incorporates **teacher self-assessment** that both reflects upon professional teaching practice and recognizes additional commitments to the school, district, and students;
- Includes **rigorous appraiser training and monitoring** on an ongoing basis for establishing inter-rater reliability and providing high-quality feedback;
- Provides **distinct information on teacher strengths and weaknesses**, making it clear where to focus support;
- Aligns supports and professional learning opportunities to **evaluation results designed to improve instruction and practice** in specific areas;
- Provides a **continuum of support** to all teachers based upon the teacher's ability to meet established teaching standards and career stage (i.e., novice, mid-career, high-performing, etc.);
- Includes a **goal-setting component** – based on student and teacher metrics – to be mutually developed by teachers and their supervisors; and
- Aligns evaluation results with human-capital decision-making and **established teacher career pathways** to maximize a teacher's positive impact on student learning.

R-11 The TEA should require districts to create or adopt evaluation measures collaboratively with teachers, as well as the continuous engagement of teachers in shaping and refining its evaluation model. This authentic engagement promotes fairness, credibility and sustainability of the system, and links the process to support structures.

Dissenting Comments:

- **Priscilla Aquino-Garza, Stand for Children-Texas** – Collaboration for the development of evaluation measures with teachers should be a statutory requirement.

R-12 The TEA should provide **a model training program for the teacher-evaluation system** it develops in order to support districts with limited capacity to certify appraisers. Districts should have an option of having their appraisers participate in state training and certification programs or developing local versions. The TEA should also develop strong criteria for initial and ongoing training around appraisal that districts should meet. Training should occur at least once a year to ensure promising practices and lessons learned are articulated and widely shared.

R-13 The TEA should ensure that the **professional engagement and growth component will include a state-developed rubric** for assessing this area, and include how the educator establishes professional

goals, participates in professional learning, applies learning to classroom practice, engages in meaningful collaboration, complies with district/school policies and procedures, and models professional integrity. If districts wish to select their own professional engagement and growth metric, they should submit those measures to the TEA for approval.

DISTRICT POLICY/PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

D-9 In building or adopting a teacher-evaluation system, districts should ensure:

- **Collaboration between local administration and teachers** to develop, adopt, implement, and monitor a teacher-evaluation system, and to refine and enhance the system and its use.
- Evaluations for teachers, administrators, and other staff working with students are linked in a way that **emphasizes the core work of schools – teaching and learning**. A teacher-evaluation system linked to overall district goals is important, but only part of an overall approach to evaluation. For example, strong principal-evaluation provisions, inclusive of school-wide student achievement performance and aligned with teacher evaluation can increase trust in the system. Also, weighting student growth by teams at the building level, and not just by individual teacher, encourages teamwork and collaboration throughout the school.

D-10 Districts should ensure that **multiple appraisers** participate in a rigorous certification process to ensure that their ratings are consistent with the standards for teaching practice, and that they demonstrate an ability to provide high-quality inter-rater reliability and actionable feedback to teachers.

Section 5: Developing

OVERVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Despite moves toward teacher evaluation that will provide data about teacher performance, professional development is still too often disconnected from what teachers need.^{xxix} Checking off professional-development requirements and logging a requisite number of professional-development hours are the priorities in many school districts, and often, state policies reflect and encourage this approach.

A better system is one that aligns specific supports to teacher needs based on their evaluations, as well as the district's strategic plan and a teacher's self-identified needs. Denver Public Schools has begun aligning its professional development to evaluation results through its Leading Effective Academic Practice (LEAP) program. The LEAP program provides videos demonstrating exemplars of effective instruction as well as individual course opportunities, all aligned to indicators on the evaluation framework. For example, a teacher whose evaluation indicates issues in classroom management can quickly and easily locate available course opportunities on classroom management, as well as view videos of teachers who excel in this area. Some states, including Tennessee, are beginning to consider what role the state can play in aligning supports to teacher needs, though this work is in its early stages. District of Columbia Public Schools also has an extensive library of resources aligned to its IMPACT evaluation system.

CURRENT STATUS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN TEXAS

State law establishes staff-development requirements. It states staff development must be conducted in accordance with standards developed by each district. The state provides funding for grants to districts to be used for specific professional-development activities, such as mathematics instructional coaches, STEM training and reading instruction. The state's 20 regional education service centers provide training and assistance to districts.

Strengths of Professional Development in Texas

- State law establishes development requirements.
- The regional education service centers provide a venue for targeted and high-quality professional development for districts.
- Teachers receive written feedback on their performance.
- Teachers with unsatisfactory evaluations must have professional-development plans aligned to their areas of weakness.
- The state provides funding through grants to districts to be used specifically for professional-development activities.

A VISION FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A high-quality professional-development system connects the needs of the teachers directly to a range of supports focused on improving knowledge, skills, and practice so that all students can reach their highest potential. Done well, such a system can produce effective teacher leaders, foster collective responsibility and drive high student achievement and success. The process begins with determining—through effectiveness audits or other research—what constitutes the most-effective professional development and combining it with the belief that a high quality system is necessary. The Commission believes a high-quality professional development system:

- Engages teachers actively in planning;
- Is aligned with a teacher’s identified area(s) of need;
- Is embedded in the work teachers do;
- Is led by people in the profession (*teachers and professional educators*);
- Is linked to the teacher’s evaluation;
- Values professional development through the investment of dollars and time spent on teacher learning during the day;
- Seeks to build on the strengths and address the challenges of all teachers, not just low-performing ones;
- Views teachers as professionals and owners of their learning;
- Includes long-term growth and career pathway goals and options;
- Emphasizes collaboration; and
- Is connected to improvement plans for individuals, campuses and districts.

The Commission believes that the primary purposes of professional development are to:

- Improve outcomes for students;
- Enable teachers to improve their practice;
- Provide ample opportunity to collaborate and work in teams to improve instruction;
- Empower teachers as leaders in the classroom;
- Provide teachers with a deep understanding of their subject matter;
- Provide teachers with a thorough knowledge of different styles of learning; and
- Provide teachers with an understanding of the sociological and psychological aspects of students.

The Commission believes that Texas should model its professional-development system after other higher-performing systems and countries where professional learning is embedded three to five days per week during the regular school day, creating a professional-learning culture through practice. **The state and every district should develop this kind of learning culture within the school, instead of adding more “required PD days.”**

The Commission recommends the following:

STATUTORY RECOMMENDATIONS

S-13 The legislature should require the TEA to **develop a high-quality framework for professional development tied to standards for teaching practice and the evaluation framework.**

S-14 The legislature should require the TEA to **develop/recommend models and/or provide incentives for changing the school day to accommodate professional development.**

S-15 The legislature should require the TEA to **audit all training demands** (including federal, state, and district requirements) for educators in the state of Texas, and use those results to **eliminate or consolidate competing and duplicative training requirements.** In addition, the TEA should be required to provide guidance to districts on what high-quality professional development looks like and what outcomes are expected.

REGULATORY/ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

R-14 The TEA should provide a **repository of best practices in professional development** to support districts. The repository could include videos of effective practice, resources, and research aligned to the state's evaluation framework and teacher standards.

R-15 The TEA should **evaluate and certify professional-development providers** to ensure that high-quality options are available.

R-16 The TEA should revise its **Title II Plan** for the U.S. Department of Education to reflect the state's desire to drive Title II funds to the campus level. At least 90 percent of district-received Title II dollars should flow directly to schools to be used in innovative ways.

DISTRICT POLICY/PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

D-11 Districts should **regularly monitor professional development** delivered by external providers for quality. Results from monitoring should be used to inform future offerings.

D-12 District should **develop a strategic approach to professional development** that includes goals, strategies, and outcomes aligned to district-provided supports and the state vision/strategy for professional development.

D-13 Districts should **restructure the school day to allow more time for adult learning and collaboration** through common planning time and strategic use of instructional coaches and mentor teachers.

D-14 Districts should require all schools in the district to **create professional learning communities** that focus on examining student work, setting goals, and addressing challenges, and provide additional compensation for educators who lead professional learning communities.

D-15 Districts should provide **opportunities for teachers to engage in professional-development activities** and supports based on their identified needs and opportunities for instructional leadership.

D-16 Districts should require **collaboration between principals and teachers to determine the goals** for professional development each year.

Dissenting Comments:

- **Priscilla Aquino-Garza, Stand for Children-Texas** – Collaboration between teachers and principals should be a statutory requirement in order to ensure it occurs. Goal setting is key to ensuring a professional setting for all educators.

D-17 Districts should ensure that:

- Professional development **enhances** rather than sacrifices instruction;
- Professional development is **differentiated** by effectiveness, proficiency, experience level, identified needs, or a combination of these factors;
- High-quality professional development happens on a **regular basis** for teachers – not only during workshops or out-of-school time. Therefore, there should be **multiple mechanisms** for the delivery of professional development, including:
 - Coaches and mentors – either internal or external to the school;
 - Classroom-embedded professional development (shoulder-to-shoulder coaching during instructional time, real-time feedback, etc.);
 - Service centers (external and internal providers); and
 - Online: Project Share, videos, chat, postings, email exchanges, modules.

Note: Commissioners understand that Project Share is a robust tool; however, they are also concerned about the lack of awareness about the tool among teachers and districts.



CULTIVATING CAREERS

Section 6: Strategic Compensation

OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC COMPENSATION

Current approaches to teacher compensation (the typical “steps and lanes” salary schedule) look much the same today as they did 75 years ago when they were put in place to assure that women and minority teachers were fairly compensated for their work. Increasingly, some states and districts are acknowledging that the single salary schedule had its time and place, but that labor markets and expectations for students have changed. States and districts need strategic compensation systems that align with the broader objectives of improving student learning and that respond to competitive labor markets.^{xxx}

Compensation reform is a significant undertaking, and cannot be addressed in isolation from the larger goals of the education system or separate from the teacher continuum. “Stand-alone” implementation of compensation reform has a high risk of failure.^{xxxi} Promising ideas from other compensation reforms across the country include:

- Eliminating salary increases simply attributable to the passage of time;
- Providing bonuses for teachers in hard-to-staff subject areas and hard-to-staff schools;
- Incorporating elements of school-wide performance improvement in compensation mechanisms; and
- Providing opportunities and increased compensation for teachers to take on the role of mentor teachers or professional-learning community lead teachers, as such higher roles are often accompanied by strict evaluation criteria and may require additional work hours.

The Denver ProComp system is one of the most well-known strategic compensation reforms in the country. ProComp, implemented in 2006, allows teachers to earn more money earlier in their careers and rewards them based in part on their contributions to growth in student learning. The system abandons the traditional salary grid and replaces it with a single “index” amount – a dollar amount negotiated by the district administration and the union. ProComp uses a combination of sustained salary increases as well as one-time bonuses, and looks at four elements: knowledge and skills; evaluation; market incentives; and growth in student learning.

Houston’s ASPIRE (Accelerating Student Progress Increasing Results and Expectations) system, which rewards teachers based on gains on students’ test scores, has also garnered national attention. ASPIRE has four core components – Developing Human Capital; Improving Teaching and Learning; Informing Practice; and Recognizing Excellence – that serve as catalysts for the district’s work. Since 2007, ASPIRE awards have totaled more than \$155 million, with \$42.4 million going to teachers last year alone.

Austin’s REACH program rewards schools and educators for meeting a variety of performance measures, including student learning objectives, professional-development units, teaching in high-needs schools and taking on leadership roles (e.g., mentoring, peer observation, professional-development facilitation). To date, Austin ISD has paid out approximately \$27.9 million to more than 1,600 educators participating in REACH. On average, AISD educators received approximately \$5,350 in 2010-2011.^{xxxii}

“The goal for the State of Texas must be to recruit, support and retain great teachers using compensation as one critical tool. Great teachers in the classroom equal great results for kids. Appropriate compensation is ONE component that keeps them there.”

–Mike Moses, former
Commissioner of
Education

States looking at compensation reforms like ProComp and ASPIRE must consider and address sustainability and funding issues. Denver taxpayers approved an additional \$25 million annually to fund their system, and Houston increased local spending, in addition to using a Teacher Incentive Fund grant, to ensure funding sustainability. **It is incumbent upon state and local boards of education to identify a permanent funding source, whether it comes from redirecting money already in the salary pool or asking voters for money to achieve this end.** The only way high-quality compensation reforms can take hold is for the process to become a regular part of business, not dependent on outside grants and other external sources of funding.

CURRENT STATUS OF STRATEGIC COMPENSATION IN TEXAS

Although funding for these programs has been eliminated or drastically reduced because of budget cuts over the years, **Texas has been a national leader in promoting new and strategic forms of teacher compensation by giving school districts access to funding streams to pay for it.** At one point, in an effort to reward and retain top talent, Texas incentive-pay programs were bigger than the federally funded Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF). According to the 2007-2008 *Salaries and Benefits in Texas Public Schools Report*, 198 school districts in Texas reported having incentive-pay plans in place.^{xxxiii} Not surprisingly, the state has led efforts to move away from traditional forms of teacher compensation. For instance, in 2005, Governor Rick Perry authorized the Commissioner of Education to establish a performance-pay grant program for Texas public schools – the Governor’s Educator’s Excellence Grant program (GEEG) – which commenced in August of 2006. In addition, in 2006, the 79th Legislature, 3rd Special Session, passed House Bill 1, which authorized two additional performance-based pay programs for Texas teachers: the Texas Educators Excellence Grant program (TEEG); and the District Awards for Teaching Excellence (DATE).

GEEG directed funds toward 100 campuses which have high percentages of economically disadvantaged students and which the state had cited for high achievement (rated exemplary or recognized by the TEA) or which showed significant improvement in the areas of math and reading. With an appropriation of \$198 million, TEEG targeted 2,241 campuses with high percentages of economically disadvantaged students and with high achievement or significant improvement in the areas of math and reading. DATE provided funding to school districts to develop either district-wide compensation systems or incentive plans for select schools. In the first year of the program, 53 percent of districts designed plans to be implemented district-wide. In year two, that number climbed to 64 percent. Arguably the most successful of Texas’s grant programs, DATE required that at least 60 percent of each award be used to award teachers who had a significant impact on student growth, with the remaining used for stipends, principal-incentive pay, and certain components of TAP (Teacher Advancement Program).

The Commission strongly encourages the legislature to consider this type of forward thinking, as it considers the following next-generation recommendations.

A VISION FOR STRATEGIC COMPENSATION

The Commission built its recommendations (shown below) for strategic compensation around the following foundational beliefs:

- Teacher voice and collaboration at the local level is crucial in all decisions regarding strategic compensation systems;
- Compensation systems should provide an adequate and respectful competitive base and allow for differentiation to account for labor market forces. **They must also recognize excellence to retain and reward great performers and teams;**

“As a result of the Commission’s thorough study of the issues, it has become evident that Texas school districts need to embrace new teacher-compensation strategies that will enable districts to be more competitive in recruiting and retaining needed teachers, while at the same time appropriately recognizing the value of the individual teacher and advancing the teaching profession. The Commission’s report presents options for districts in achieving this end.”

—Michael Boone, Haynes and Boone, LLP

- The state and local districts must have a realistic expectation that compensation is only one part of the overall system and a change in this system – without holistic changes in other phases of the teaching continuum – won’t result in spikes in student achievement. Also, across-the-board salary raises will not result in increased student achievement. Raises – outside of cost-of-living allowances – need to be based on teacher effectiveness; and
- In combination, a competitive salary, high-quality health benefits and a reliable pension system form the basis of a comprehensive compensation system.

The Commission recommends that the following actions be taken:

STATUTORY RECOMMENDATIONS

S-16 The legislature should **eliminate the salary schedule for teachers and mandate a minimum entry-level salary of \$41,000**. The state should consider the minimum required entry-level salary every two years to ensure that it is always competitive with entry-level salaries of like professions. In doing this, the Commission also recognizes that experienced teachers need to be compensated for their contributions as well (see S-17).

S-17 The legislature should **create a compensation allotment in the Foundation School Program (FSP)** that districts can access to drive funding directly to teacher salaries and incentivize districts to develop strategic compensation models. These funds should be made available to districts that meet a set of pre-defined criteria, including:

- A hold-harmless provision to ensure that no teacher makes less money under the new system;
- A percent of FSP should be earmarked for teacher salaries:
 - A percent of that allocation should be focused on district’s strategic compensation plans.
 - All current grant programs (DATE, BTIM, etc.) should be rolled into this allotment;
 - District-developed strategic compensation plans should be directed at providing additional base pay for teachers that meet at least one of the following criteria:
 - Demonstrated effectiveness in improving student achievement—tied to evaluation;
 - Served as a mentor for other classroom teachers;
 - Assumed responsibilities in addition to performing classroom teaching duties;
 - Taught in a subject area or a position experiencing a critical shortage of teachers, if the classroom teacher is qualified to teach in that subject area or position;
 - Taught at a district school that is among the schools in the state that have a shortage of teachers;
 - Taught at a district school that is among the schools in the state that have the greatest difficulty hiring or retaining classroom teachers; or
 - Was determined by the district to meet specific local market needs.

S-18 The legislature should require the TEA to **collect salary information** and report average salaries of teachers by content and grade level.

S-19 The legislature should require the TEA to **conduct a cost-of-living salary comparability analysis** by region to determine if teacher wages compare to those of like professions, and report on it to the public and legislature.

DISTRICT POLICY/PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

D-18 Districts should **provide incentives** for teachers to serve in high-shortage areas and hard-to-staff positions.

D-19 Districts should **seek TIF funds to provide additional pay** for effective teachers in high-shortage areas and hard-to-staff positions.

D-20 Districts should ensure that all increases in a teacher's compensation, not including cost-of-living raises, **correlate in some way to their evaluation**.

Section 7: Retention

OVERVIEW OF RETENTION

Teacher retention continues to be a significant challenge across the country, costing school districts substantial funds in annual recruitment and hiring processes, and in opportunity costs stemming from the loss of experienced teachers.^{xxxiv} Many factors contribute to the retention problem, including poor working conditions, poor school-based leadership, and low teacher salaries. Additionally, teachers have few, if any, opportunities beyond the classroom, other than administration, to grow professionally and share what they know and can do.^{xxxv} Teaching can also be isolating, with limited opportunities for the type of peer interaction that occurs in other professions. And, when teachers are laid off due to budget cuts, the criterion is almost always seniority – not effectiveness, skill, or assignment.^{xxxvi} Finally, teachers are paid virtually the same, regardless of their level of skill or difficulty of assignment, and are awarded salary increases based on level of education and years of experience, without regard to effectiveness or market forces.^{xxxvii}

Recognizing these challenges, the Baltimore City Public Schools designed a new **Teacher Designation System** based upon building career pathways to retain teachers. It establishes four points of a career: **standard teacher; professional teacher; model teacher; and lead teacher**. Teachers move on the pathway by earning “**achievement units**” (AUs). Teachers earn AUs through their evaluations, which include measures of student growth (12 AUs for proficient and 9 AUs for satisfactory evaluations; 3 AUs for a rating above unsatisfactory but below satisfactory) and participation in professional-development activities that contribute to student learning. A grandfather clause allows eligible coursework in pursuit of certification and recertification to count as one AU per college credit.

Retention discussions frequently focus on root causes of attrition: salary (both the size of average teacher salaries and the lockstep approaches to paying teachers); teacher preparation; and working conditions. States have more recently turned their attention to working conditions, including the quality of building leadership, and the availability of high-quality mentoring and induction programs. For instance, the New Teacher Center launched its Teaching and Learning Conditions Initiative that ties working-condition survey results to student achievement.^{xxxviii} Ten states have participated to date, including Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee.

The New Teacher Center Teaching and Learning Conditions Initiative

New Teacher Center's Teaching and Learning Conditions Initiative is rooted in the Teaching & Learning Conditions Survey, a statewide, online, validated survey of school-based educators that assesses teaching conditions throughout an education system and provides school-by-school information on educator perceptions of whether critical conditions are present. Working with a state's education leaders, New Teacher Center builds a coalition of stakeholders, policymakers, and practitioners to support and communicate the importance of the survey, and to encourage participation and use of survey results to inform school, district, and state policies.

<http://www.newteachercenter.org/services/teaching-learning-conditions-initiative>

The North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission began implementing a biennial teacher working-conditions survey statewide in 2002. Their survey includes teaching condition elements such as time, leadership, empowerment, professional development, facilities, resources, and induction – all important to teacher retention. An analysis of a recent survey was conducted by the New Teacher Center, which demonstrated “significant connections between positive teacher working conditions and student achievement and teacher retention.”^{xxxix}

CURRENT STATUS OF RETENTION IN TEXAS

The State of Texas has experienced a 14.4 percent average teacher turnover rate over the last five years.^{xl} This is due to a variety of factors such as retirement, unhappiness with the profession or leadership, and offers from higher-paying fields. The state and several districts have begun to consider new retention strategies such as incentive pay, career-advancement opportunities, and a sharper focus on improving working conditions. However, a greater emphasis must be placed on this phase of work throughout the state as the baby boomers get closer to retirement and a new generation of teachers begins to place greater emphasis on career-advancement opportunities and high-quality working conditions than ever before.

A VISION FOR RETENTION

The Texas Teaching Commission spent a great deal of time talking about the importance of retaining effective teachers through high-quality induction programs, rigorous and fair evaluation systems, focused and embedded professional-development, and strategic compensation opportunities. The Commission believes that throughout each phase, the state and local districts must remember that climate and working conditions do matter for teachers because they understand its connection to student growth and learning.

The Commission recommends that the following actions be taken:

STATUTORY RECOMMENDATIONS

S-20 The legislature should fund and require the TEA to administer a **teacher working-conditions survey similar to North Carolina** (see above). This instrument should not be mandated and not publicly reported, but it should be provided as a resource for districts to improve its instructional environment. The working-conditions survey could be implemented into the school-improvement planning and into preparation-program planning. It can also be used to evaluate and set standards for principals and superintendents.

S-21 The legislature should give school principals authority to ensure that their students are in a positive environment to learn, including having **the authority to place students on out-of-school suspension**. The legislature should also ensure the continued support of the Positive Proactive Response for Outcome-Based Success (PROS) project. PROS utilizes the Campus Behavior Intervention and Success Strategies (CBISS) model and links to instructional practices, social skills training, and staff coaching support to reduce the number of students placed in disciplinary settings.

Dissenting Comments:

- **Priscilla Aquino-Garza, Stand for Children-Texas** – Use of discipline measures that expels students to out of school suspension and that are usually based on zero tolerance policies have proven ineffective in improving the behaviors of suspended students and discipline rates in schools. Instead Stand recommends greater focus on positive behavior systems and support for social and emotional learning.

REGULATORY/ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

R-17 Because culture in the workplace is critical to the retention of effective teachers, the TEA should continue to **look for opportunities to support teachers in their efforts to improve student discipline** and ensure that students placed on out-of-school suspension are not left without any educational or support options.

R-18 The TEA should require school districts to **disaggregate teacher-retention data by performance** level using the evaluation system recommended by Commission.

DISTRICT POLICY/PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

D-21 Districts should integrate the state-developed/adopted **working-conditions survey** into their school-improvement planning.

D-22 Districts should develop a **career track for teachers** that includes distinct designations that reflect a progression from novice to advanced skill and effectiveness, such as the following: (see Baltimore Teacher Designation System above and S-17)

- Standard teacher
- Professional teacher
- Model teacher
- Lead teacher

D-23 Districts should develop **policies that reflect opportunity cost and other market forces**, and encourage and support differentiated pay – by job, subject, responsibilities, etc.

D-24 District should provide teachers with **structured and deliberate opportunities** to have a voice in decisions affecting their career.

The state and local districts should evaluate their approaches to each phase of the teaching continuum to determine their alignment with each other, as well as whether each is aligned to strategic education goals and standards for teaching practice.



ALIGNED RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Commission’s recommendations are intended to guide Texas and its local districts toward a more coherent and aligned teaching continuum. **Taken as a whole, these recommendations would allow Texas to make significant strides toward becoming a leader in teacher effectiveness.** The Commissioners hope this policy set will improve the quality of teaching and student learning across the state.

As previously noted, although this report provides recommendations for each element of the continuum separately, the Commission considers these recommendations to be a package of interrelated and aligned actions that will be most effective if they are all implemented. An aligned, strategic system in Texas and within local districts will ensure that each component of the teaching continuum is aligned to the **standards for teaching practice** and to its instructional goals. The following table provides **a sample** of the recommendations provided in this report and their alignment to other phases of the teaching continuum:

Tackling human-capital reforms is an enormous task and one that will not be accomplished overnight. The recommendations in this report begin the process and provide a structure for identifying states’ and districts’ roles in reform policies and strategies. By analyzing the current state of alignment – both horizontally between phases of the teaching continuum and vertically with the standards for teaching practice – states and districts can develop a strategic and targeted approach to improving teacher effectiveness.

The following table provides **a sample** of the recommendations provided in this report and their alignment to other phases of the teaching continuum.

| Phase | Commission Recommendations | Aligns to: |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Foundational | Policies regarding the Teaching Continuum should be anchored in and aligned to high-quality standards for teaching. Review the standards adopted by SBEC (Proficiencies for Learner-Centered Instruction, 1997) and the state certification standards to ensure they reflect best practices in teaching and learning. The review and any revision-recommendation development should be done in collaboration with current classroom teachers, and include an analysis of how the standards reflect both team and individual roles and accountability in academic performance. This process should lead the state to the adoption of clear, high-quality, and rigorous standards for teaching practice that form the foundation of all state teaching policies. | All elements of teaching continuum |
| Recruitment and Preparation | S-2 The legislature should ensure that the state's teacher-preparation programs – traditional and alternative – incorporate an opportunity for clinical experience (such as a teacher residency program) that will enable teacher candidates to participate in the public education system in Texas. The clinical experience should include exposure to academic content standards and assessments, classroom management, and teacher-evaluation expectations. | Hiring, Induction, Development |
| | D-4 Districts should facilitate stronger relationships between high schools and colleges of education by encouraging teams of college faculty and K-12 teachers within teacher-preparation programs to collaboratively design courses and programs to meet the needs of K-12 students. | Induction, Development |
| Hiring | S-6 The legislature should explore the refinement and restoration of funding for loan-incentive programs such as the Teach for Texas Loan Repayment program, to include a "Texas Teacher Tomorrow" fund component for teachers who have taught over 10-20 years, loan-forgiveness programs for teachers' children and for teachers willing to teach shortage-area subjects. | Recruitment, Retention |
| | S-7 The legislature should provide incentives for teachers to serve in high-shortage areas and hard-to-staff positions. | Recruitment, Strategic Compensation |
| Induction | R-7 The TEA should develop recommendations and implement actions that would align BTIMS to the standards for teaching practice and the teacher-evaluation system. | Preparation, Evaluation |
| | D-6 Districts should require mentoring for new teachers beyond year one. | Development, Retention |
| Evaluation | S-12 The legislature should require districts to use consecutive evaluations from multiple years, as available to inform employment and career decisions. | Strategic Compensation, Retention |
| | R-13 The TEA should ensure that the professional engagement and growth component include a state-developed rubric for assessing this area that includes how the educator establishes professional goals, participates in professional learning, applies learning to classroom practice, engages in meaningful collaboration, complies with district/school policies and procedures, and models professional integrity. If districts wish to select their own professional engagement and growth metric, they should submit those measures to the TEA for approval. | Development, Retention |
| Professional Development | S-13 The legislature should require the TEA to develop a high-quality framework for professional development tied to the standards for teaching practice and the evaluation framework. | Evaluation, Retention |
| | D-13 Districts should restructure the school day to allow more time for adult learning and collaboration through common planning time and strategic use of instructional coaches and mentor teachers. | Induction, Evaluation, Retention |
| Strategic Compensation | S-17 The legislature should create a compensation allotment in the Foundation School Program (FSP) that districts can access to drive funding directly to teacher salaries and to incentivize districts to develop strategic compensation models. (see S-16). | Recruitment, Induction, Retention |
| | D-20 Districts should ensure that all increases in a teacher's compensation, not including cost-of-living raises, be correlated in some way to their evaluation. | Recruitment, Evaluation |
| Retention | S-20 The legislature should require the TEA to provide a working-conditions survey for schools. | Recruitment, Evaluation, Retention |
| | R-18 The TEA should require school districts to disaggregate retention data by performance level using the evaluation system recommended by the Commission. | Evaluation, Strategic Compensation |

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DALLAS OFFICE

c/o Communities Foundation of Texas
5500 Caruth Haven Lane
Dallas, TX 75225-8146
(214) 750-4222
EdTX@cftexas.org

AUSTIN OFFICE

701 Brazos Street, Suite 500
Austin, TX 78701
(512) 536-1160
EdTX@cftexas.org

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